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“Fasting, Feasting” Mad 40

In “Fasting, Feasting,” author Anita Desai uses harsh diction, insidious imagery, and a shift in point of view to characterize Arun’s experience in the woods as unsettling.

Desai’s choice of diction reveals the jarring nature of the excursion to the beach. To Arun, everything about his host family is unnatural, especially their fondness for the beach and the wilderness. Desai uses short, staccato sentences in Arun’s descriptions of the forest and the wilderness to portray the nature imagery as jarring, thus characterizing Arun’s experience in the forest as unsettling.

Imagery, coupled with diction, also aids in characterizing Arun’s experience in the wilderness. Desai’s images of his host family are unnatural and fake- Melanie’s shirt is “drawn over her shoulders” and Mrs. Patton shows him a “lipsticked smile,”revealing his attitude toward others. Nature imagery in “Fasting, Feasting” also reveals Arun’s attitude towards the wilderness, with a sinister, “creeping curtain” of “insidious, green,” and “ugly, jarring” notes from the birds in hiding. Nature imagery is rarely characterized as evil, yet Arun describes his surrounding wilderness as disquieting and unnatural. Arun’s descriptions of both his host family and surrounding nature reveal his unsettling experiences.

Desai’s shift in the narrative’s point of view characterizes Arun’s experience in the woods. Arun’s descriptions of his host family are in the third person, helping the reader connect to Arun and relate to his experiences. Nature imagery in the play, however, is described by an omniscient narrator, revealing a cold and unfeeling attitude towards nature. The shift in point of view, from third person to omniscient narration, shows Arun’s preference to people over nature and characterizes his experience in the woods as unnatural.

In “Fasting, Feasting,” Anita Desai characterizes Arun’s excursion to the beach and trek through the woods as unsettling through her use of jarring diction, unnatural imagery, and a shift in point of view.